

Museum, but no American university library is treated so extensively as the Bodleian. The discussion of the American public library is not so suggestive as Dr. Munthe's brilliant essay on the pessimist and the public library; but it is a sober, informative description based on the best primary sources. On the other hand, he sometimes tends to misinterpret the work of the liberal arts college library, especially in its relation to research. He gives full credit to the role of philanthropy in the growth of American libraries, and there is a brief but sound account of the work of the Carnegie Corporation.

Two peculiar aspects of American librarianship are exceptionally well treated. In dealing with the growth of the early research libraries Dr. Predeek shows the importance of acquisition of the private libraries of great European scholars. This subject which he has outlined so well deserves greater attention than it has hitherto received from library surveyors. The material on education for librarianship shows a deep-rooted understanding of our problems. Dr. Predeek does not look down his nose in pious contempt for American colleagues simply because most of them could not qualify for the Prussian *höherer Dienst*, but he discusses our problems intelligently and offers many helpful suggestions.

Dr. Predeek's treatise should be read by every American librarian who commands the minimum essentials of German.—*Lawrence Thompson, Iowa State College Library.*

Ancient Libraries. James Westfall Thompson. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1940. vi, 120p. \$2.

THIS little volume, although a later and separate publication, may seem at first

glance to be merely an introduction to the author's *Medieval Libraries* (1939), which was reviewed by Prof. Curtis H. Walker in this journal, June, 1940. Actually there is no formal connection between the two books. Even the identity of authorship is deceptive; as a medievalist Prof. Thompson is an expert, as an orientalist and a classicist he is an amateur. Moreover, there is little historical connection between his two subjects; although medieval librarians may have re-assembled some volumes which had once been in Greek or Roman libraries, the medieval institutions, as institutions, were autochthonous. In the interim the very idea of a library had perished and it had to be reinvented.

Yet despite their independence some comparison is inevitable between these two books in the field of library history which bear the same name on their title pages. Here in many points *Ancient Libraries* has the advantage. It is lucid and logical, not only in sentence structure but also in organic composition. Its style is inter-fused with the enthusiasm and vitality of the author. As one reads one can almost see and hear Prof. Thompson in person. *Medieval Libraries*, on the contrary, is turgid and heavy, but that was the work of many collaborators whose rhetorical infelicities were perhaps heightened rather than tempered by editorial attempts to bring them into unison.

In the matter of content, however, the present work is inferior. It is too brief for its theme. In fifty pages an attempt is made to summarize our knowledge concerning Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Greek, and Roman libraries; in forty-eight pages there is a discussion of "various technical matters . . . such as the format of books, library architecture, cataloging and clas-

sification, administration, book production, and bookselling" throughout the whole ancient period; two pages contain a glossary of Latin words; and twenty pages, in fine print, are devoted to notes and bibliographies. With such a distribution of materials it is difficult to understand for what kind of readers the book is intended; on the one side it is over-journalistic, on the other it is over-erudite. One must suspect that Prof. Thompson has combined lectures delivered to amateur book clubs with selections from his own research notes.

In neither respect is the book wholly satisfactory as a contribution to the historical literature of librarianship. For Egyptian and Mesopotamian libraries the treatment is inadequate and sometimes inaccurate. In the discussion of Greek libraries the Hellenic and the Hellenistic civilizations are not clearly defined. The section on Roman libraries, like that on technical matters, is in large part a repetition of corresponding sections in his *Medieval Libraries*. Finally and most unfortunately the bibliographies lack critical annotations.

Yet in spite of these imperfections this book should be acquired by every historical library. In this field, as always, Prof. Thompson makes comparisons, throws off suggestions, and opens perspectives which will illuminate more laborious and better documented treatises on the same subject, compiled by precise but less talented men.—*Pierce Butler, Graduate Library School, University of Chicago.*

Wings for Words; The Story of Johann Gutenberg and His Invention of Printing. Douglas C. McMurtrie. Rand McNally, 1940. \$2.

PERHAPS none of the writers who have

contributed to the literature of the past year on the invention of printing has set himself a more difficult task than Mr. McMurtrie in this book, which purports to be the story of Johann Gutenberg and the conditions under which printing from moveable type was invented and developed in the Western world. The format and treatment are evidently intended to interest adolescent readers.

Mr. McMurtrie has wisely seen that the scanty data available on the life of Gutenberg and the progress of his invention are far from the kind of thrill one receives from a western or a mystery story. If he has ignored some of the possibilities for sensation afforded by the disturbed period of which the work treats, he has added greatly to the value of his book by sticking closely to authentic sources and has confined the fictional additions to details which add interest but in no way affect the historical integrity of the story.

Two or three adults who have read it report it interesting and informative. The appendix on the mechanics of early printing and the list of important dates in printing are intended for adults and give the book reference value in many adult departments. The illustrations are really an aid to a fuller understanding of the text.

The book is not a substitute for Mr. McMurtrie's more technical researches, nor is it intended to be. There is a large number of persons, even among college students, who know little about the beginnings of printing or the conditions under which the process was developed. For these the book will be an accurate and interesting source of information.—*Frank K. Walter, University of Minnesota Library.*